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Volume 55, Number 4, Autumn 2005

Washington County Historical Society
118 East Dickson Street, Fayetteville, AR 72701

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FLASHBACK

Washington County Historical Society
Preserving the Past for the Future
Volume 55 **Autumn 2005** **Number 4**

CONTENTS

"A CELEBRATION OF ENDURANCE": FAYETTEVILLE'S ST. JAMES UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Brent E. Riffel 159

OLD SCHOOL HOUSES: WHAT IS THEIR FATE?
Lloyd O. Warren 179

SKELTON VS. SHELTON: THE VERDICT IS IN
Dwain H. Skelton 202

COMMENT FROM A READER 204

DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS 2005 205

INDEX TO VOLUME 55 206

Cover: The Belle of Fayetteville (Courtesy David Huff of Bob's Studio of Photography). No further information is available.

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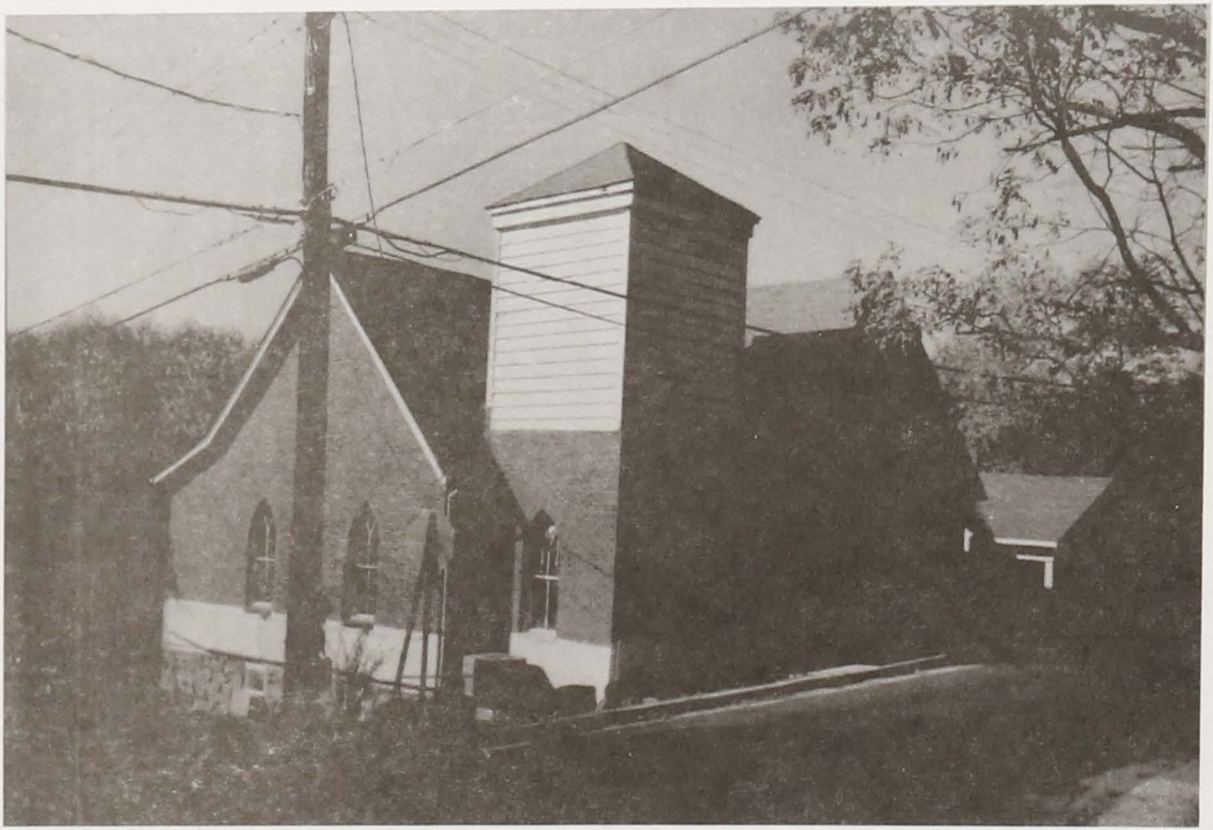


St. James United Methodist Church in 1999 (Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Curtis Morris, photographer)

"A CELEBRATION OF ENDURANCE" FAYETTEVILLE'S ST. JAMES UNITED METHODIST CHURCH[1]

BRENT E. RIFFEL

St. James Methodist Episcopal Church of Fayetteville, Arkansas, marked Easter Sunday 1893 with a performance by Miss Cora Patterson, a member of the congregation who sang "Let Me In."[2] A graduate of Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Patterson was considered by locals to be one of the finest singers in the state, rivaling the talent of Sissieretta Jones, the most renowned black vocalist of the era. The previous winter Patterson had sung in the local opera house and had "carried the audience by storm."[3] By the 1890s St. James had become a fixture in the city, particularly for the small African American community whose needs it served.

The history of St. James Methodist Episcopal Church, a small yet vibrant congregation located just off the town square in Fayetteville, Arkansas, extends at least as far back as 1866, when the annual Arkansas and Missouri Methodist Conference met at Louisiana, Missouri.[4] The minutes of this meeting indicate that blacks living in Fayetteville had requested a pastor and that one had yet to be supplied. The following year a white minister named W. L. Malloy was named as the first minister of the congregation that became known as St. James Methodist Episcopal Church.[5] With this begins the history of this church, which has continued to serve the black community of Fayetteville to the present day.[6]

Brent Riffel is a doctoral candidate in history at the University of Arkansas, specializing in social and economic history in the modern U.S. South and the Civil Rights Movement. He has published scholarly articles in publications such as *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* and is a contributor to the *African American National Biography*.

Following the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, freed slaves living in Northwest Arkansas began to forge a distinct community, and establishing their own congregations was integral to this process. In terms of religion the Civil War left a scorched mark through the city of Fayetteville, as Methodists squared off against each other along pro- and anti-slavery lines. The official line held by the Methodist Episcopal Church, based in Philadelphia, was that southern Methodists had left the church, but the so-called Northern Methodists (who claimed to be the legitimate Church) refused to concede the loss of these southern churches.[7] The dispute among Methodists over slavery had led, in 1844, to a split into northern and southern branches of the church, which would not be healed until after the war. By 1863, as Union forces gained control over Arkansas, occupying Little Rock and Fayetteville, irate southern Methodists burned all of Fayetteville's churches, in the hopes of preventing use of them by Union garrisons. As a contemporary observer noted: "In their work there, [Northern Methodist] ministers met with great opposition, and as the slavery agitation increased just before the war, this opposition became greater, resulting in, in many instances, their forcible expulsion from neighborhoods."[8] Thus Northern Methodists often went into hiding, despite the fact that Union forces occupied the city from 1863 until the end of the Civil War.

As a result it was not until after the war that blacks living in Fayetteville managed to establish their own churches. Further limiting the development of such churches in these years was the small black population in Northwest Arkansas. The 1890 census shows a total population of 3,000 with blacks constituting roughly 300 of this number.[9] This figure had been much higher in the 1860s, before many blacks living in northwest Arkansas took emancipation as an opportunity to relocate in places such as Kansas City and St. Louis. Indeed, while Washington County's overall population rose from 13,100 to just under 17,000 during the

1860s, its black population dropped from 1538 in 1860 to 674 ten years later.[10]

Before emancipation blacks had no independent churches, although a long tradition of slave religion existed throughout the antebellum period. When not worshipping privately, slaves typically exercised their faith in the same chapels as their masters did, often sitting in the balcony. Occasionally separate services would be held for slaves, but generally the spiritual needs of slaves were met without the aid of organized clergy. For instance, George Walker, an early member of St. James, and the freed slave of local judge David Walker, had grown up worshipping in his master's Baptist church. But the major rites of passage in his life—such as his birth, baptism, and marriage—were conducted without official church sanction.[11] With emancipation, blacks throughout the South began to establish their own congregations, often with a conscious nod to African tradition (which slavery had largely extinguished throughout much of the region). For much of its history St. James Methodist Church has been erroneously identified as an African Church, a common mistake as many whites often mistook all black churches as African denominations. St. James, however, has remained a part of Methodist conferences throughout its history. In its early years, however, it was known by several names, but it had settled on the name St. James by 1888.

As St. James Methodist Church was in its infancy, a black Baptist church (also known as St. James, and located in the same neighborhood) emerged as well. These churches served a spiritual as well as civic function for Fayetteville's black community. Prior to 1875, no marriage license was required for black couples to wed; they often did so by "jumping the broom."[12] Freed blacks also had to construct cemeteries since they no longer buried relatives in plots on the property of slaveholders. To administer these duties, black ministers were needed, and educated, seminary-trained clergy (as required by the Methodist Church) among the black community were in short supply. In 1877 Little Rock's

Philander Smith College was established to educate former slaves and to train blacks to become Methodist ministers.

While blacks in Fayetteville had been free since 1863, the tensions brought on by the Civil War, Union occupation, and the burning of local churches by irate southern Methodists, prevented them forming their own churches until after 1865, when hostilities began to subside. The onset of Reconstruction, despised by most of the South, brought with it, among other things, the Freedman's Bureau, which sought to ease the transition from slavery to a free labor system. In Fayetteville the Freedman's Bureau set up the city's first black schools, but it was primarily concerned with former slaves' economic, not spiritual development. As a result, the establishment of St. James stemmed from freed slaves' sheer determination as well as their cooperation with sympathetic, often northern-born, whites living in Fayetteville.

The emergence of a black Methodist congregation in the city coincided with the establishment of public education for black students living in the Red Hill District, a black section of town known, variously, as the "Botefuhr" neighborhood and "Tin Cup."[13] As Fayetteville physician Edward Forest Ellis recalled in the 1950s, "there were a few scattered cabins for colored people in Red Hill."[14] Ellis also recounted the creation of the Henderson School, the first public school for blacks in the city, built in 1866, and named for E. E. Henderson, who served as U.S. Marshall in the area from 1866 to 1872[15]. He established the school under orders from the Freedman's Bureau, and Dora Ford, a missionary from New England, was named its first principal.[16] This was at a time when no public schools for whites existed, as families who could afford it provided their children with private tutors. The development of education for the black community during the Reconstruction era also established an unprecedented degree of new interracial social contacts. As W. E. B. DuBois remarked in his study of the Reconstruction years, this widening of interaction

that took place in schools was one of the "astonishing successes" of the period.[17]

The Fayetteville black community meanwhile began to establish its own churches in the 1860s, with the help of sympathetic whites imbued with an egalitarian sprit engendered by Union victory in the war and the Reconstruction era that followed. Elmira Cooper, who during her childhood was a member of St. James in its early days, recalled in a 1941 interview that in 1866 the Polk family, prominent members of Fayetteville's business community, had given land on Rock Street in order for blacks to establish a chapel.[18] In its first few years St. James quickly began to serve a civic role in the community; over the next two years pastor W. L. Malloy married twenty-three couples.[19] Also in 1866, at the urging of William Andrews, the presiding elder of the black Arkansas District, St. James became integrated into the northern Methodist Episcopal Church (ME).[20] The acceptance of former slaves by northern Methodists was anathema to many southern Methodists, who asserted that blacks were being manipulated by conspiratorial Yankees.[21] But for St. James, associating with the northern ME eventually led to the construction of a permanent home for the congregation—a church that still stands. Reliance on the northern ME proved essential because the establishment of St. James was undertaken in lean economic years, as well as a period of bitter political divides over the outcome of the war and Reconstruction.

The members of St. James were not exempt from racial discord, as a terrifying 1869 incident confirms. The small black population of Northwest Arkansas tended to keep racial unrest relatively infrequent compared with much of the plantation South.[22] But occasionally religion could instigate trouble. One evening in late December 1869, services at the chapel on Rock Street were suddenly disrupted when a stranger on horseback, described as a night-riding Klansmen, appeared at the church door and demanded that one of the parishioners, Andy McKinney, come

with them.[23] Instead, McKinney bolted from the church, and "at a bound, went over a six-foot fence, and ran across a lot with such speed, that the balls from five pistols failed to overtake him."[24] Newspaper accounts differed over the cause of this incident. The *Fayetteville Echo* claimed that the night-riders were attempting to break up evening church services, which, the paper suggested, "have been so demonstrative that they have disturbed the neighborhood."[25] Another report noted that the incident stemmed from a personal dispute and was not a reactionary attack against black churches.[26] Regardless, while late nineteenth-century observers hailed Fayetteville as a town in which "the whites of this city are more anxious to have many of the Afro-Americans elevated," the establishment of St. James clearly rankled some whites in the community.[27] Moreover, the formation of the all-black Henderson School was viewed by some whites as a threat to the status quo. The school, coupled with the emergence of black churches, posed a political danger, according to white southerners who saw such congregations as fronts for a cabal of carpetbaggers.[28] And as E. Franklin Frazier noted, the black church was the only institution in Reconstruction America in which whites had virtually no control.[29] Recognizing this, black Methodists in Arkansas took steps during the 1870s to gain a measure of financial and administrative autonomy—the two areas in which whites still maintained a measure of authority over black churches.

Accordingly, in 1879, after a four-year debate, Arkansas's black Methodists met in Little Rock and formed the first independent black conference.[30] At this meeting, they organized their own leadership conference, which allowed them to run their own churches without outside interference from the larger, white-controlled Arkansas and Missouri Conference. The minutes of this meeting do not suggest internal discord, but rather a sense that, in line with their other achievements during the Reconstruction era, black Methodists simply wanted their own churches, their own ministers. However, the relative lack of seminary-trained black

ministers meant that even after 1879 white pastors would continue to serve a vital role in black churches, as both advisers and pastors.[31] But as Philander Smith College began to turn out ministers, this situation changed. Indeed, one of the first black ministers at St. James, W. R. R. Duncan, was appointed in 1883, and later rose to the post of presiding elder over the Arkansas black conference.[32] Thus the establishment of an autonomous black conference, coupled with increasing numbers of college-educated ministers, signaled that black Methodist congregations were increasingly able to stand on their own (without the aid of local southern Methodists, who seemed to have ignored them in the early years of the church). The black Methodist conference would remain organizationally independent until 1932, when it rejoined the larger Southwest Conference.[33]

The congregation at Rock Street (that would in the next few years come to be known as St. James) continued to prosper throughout the 1870s and into the 1880s, until a tornado swept through Fayetteville in 1881, leveling the so-called Botefuhr district. Although no records exist which verify that the Rock Street church was destroyed, after the tornado church members began to seek financing for a new chapel. E. F. Ellis recalled the 1881 tornado as "a disastrous wind storm in which the Glass Hotel was blown down and Mrs. Glass was killed...the south side of the square was mostly demolished."[34] Along the same path, to the east, the Rock Street home of Sam Young, a black Methodist butcher born in 1846, was destroyed.[35] The first official map of Fayetteville, completed in 1884, notes the existence of the black Methodist church on Rock Street (as well as the nearby black Baptist church) a short distance from where Sam Young's home had stood. Though it may never be definitively confirmed, the 1881 tornado apparently led local black Methodists in the city to seek a new chapel. The minister at the time, Ulysses S. Kitchens, met with William McIlroy, a reclusive banker considered sympathetic to Reconstruction. On March 7, 1882, McIlroy (along

with his wife Martha) sold one-half acre for seventy-five dollars to the trustees of what was initially known as Kitchens Chapel.[36] After Kitchens moved on the following year (an itinerant preacher, he stayed in Northwest Arkansas), the chapel eventually became known as St. James. The sale of this property, on Willow and Center streets, marks the beginning of St. James at its present location, confirming its existence as one of the oldest Methodist churches still in existence west of the Mississippi River.[37]

Thus by 1883 Fayetteville's black Methodist community began a new chapter in its history, but it still lacked a chapel to replace the one at Rock Street. Although they had essentially been independent since the formation of their own conference in 1879, St. James relied on capital from the national organization of the Northern Methodist Church. In order to construct a chapel the congregation appealed to the Methodist Board of Church Extension, based in Philadelphia. In March 1883 the Board issued a grant in the amount of $250 "for aid to enable and procure and to possess a Home of Worship."[38] The grant stipulated that the funds were to be immediately reimbursed if St. James ceased its affiliation with the Northern Methodist church. Moreover, the grant had to be refunded if St. James sold or mortgaged the property on which the church was to be built.[39] Along with the 1882 deed of sale of the property by McIlroy, the grant issued the following year (along with the 1884 official city map of Fayetteville) firmly places the origins of St. James in the early 1880s.

Now came the task of building the church itself, a process completed within a year. An 1884 appraisal of the church property indicates that it had a value of five hundred dollars.[40] This increase in property value (it doubled in just a year) suggests that the church had been quickly constructed. This also raises one of the more controversial issues surrounding the early years of St. James: who built the church? It has long been speculated that members of the congregation built the church themselves, piecemeal, using leftover

bricks from the University of Arkansas's Old Main building. Stories circulate that many members of St. James had worked as laborers on the construction of Old Main, which was completed in 1875.[41] It has been suggested that excess bricks, or those deemed unworthy by Old Main's contractors, were taken back to the Botefuhr neighborhood and used as foundations for homes, fence posts, and eventually, the St. James chapel itself. While the members of St. James undoubtedly played a crucial, hands-on role in building the church, its construction unfolded with the help of Fayetteville's leading brick mason, Shepherd Blackmer, as well as one of the city's patriarchs, builder Albert M. Byrnes.

The fruitful partnership between Blackmer and Byrnes resulted in the construction of hundreds of homes and businesses in Washington County, particularly after 1881, when the city was first connected by rail to other, larger cities. Blackmer, born in Massachusetts in 1844, arrived in Fayetteville in the early 1880s.[42] One of his brick masons was W. T. Fry, an early member of St. James. By 1904 Fry had become of the church's trustees.[43] Albert Byrnes was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1849. After immigrating to New York in 1866, he made his way to Fayetteville that same year, seeking economic opportunity in the booming area.[44] By his death in 1932, Byrnes had built over five hundred buildings in northwest Arkansas, including those on the town square (which had been destroyed in the 1881 tornado and again, by fire, in the 1890s); the Ozark Theater (the town's opera house), Hill Hall (the University's engineering building), and the county jail.[45] Sympathetic to the need for blacks to have a place to worship, Blackmer and Byrnes, with the instrumental help of the St. James congregation, quickly built the chapel, completing it in 1884. Modern observers have noted the professional craftsmanship of the work, which indicates that the bricks were not seconds from Old Main, but rather bricks fried specifically for St. James—perhaps by church member W. T. Fry himself.[46] They were probably hand-fired bricks, as they were painted a bright red, as was commonly done to give the appearance

of uniformity. White mortar lines were painted on as well.[47] By the end of 1884 the St. James Church, as it now stands, was essentially compete, though renovations would continue to be made up to the present day. Its design was similar to several other churches in the area, with two rooms joined by a steeple that contained a bell tower.[48] The church was a wood and brick structure, roughly forty by sixty feet. It had windows on three sides, with an entrance on the south end of the building.

Throughout the 1880s St. James was a small, if growing congregation. It spent the rest of the decade making improvements on the chapel, again with the aid of northern Methodist grants, as well as with the financial help of Blackmer and Byrnes, who established the Fayetteville Building and Loan in 1885. In 1888 St. James took out two mortgages for renovations. Both of these loans were made by Byrnes and Blackmer. The first, for $250, was quickly paid off within the year. A second loan, for $400, was also paid off within months, probably with the help of private donations and the aid of larger Methodist churches in the area.[49] Indeed, for much of its history and up to the present day St. James has struggled financially.

As St. James entered the 1890s it continued to reach out to the community, as it remained a small, yet important part of the growing city of Fayetteville. In 1898, with the help of another grant—this time for $250—from the northern Methodist Episcopal Board of Church Extension, St. James purchased pews from Cumberland Presbyterian Church. In the next few years St. James secured funds for and built a parsonage, which still stands. A cursory examination of the church's financial situation during the middle of the twentieth century suggests that St. James continued to weather lean years. Its collection receipts in the years from 1946 to 1965, for instance, reveal that the congregation took in no more than $3600 annually from its weekly collection.[50]

In July 1910 a damaging storm shook Fayetteville. Lightning struck the courthouse and strong winds ripped down the St. James

steeple, destroying the bell tower.[51] This event has been a source of interest among contemporary members of the congregation, as the church is currently undergoing extensive renovation. An undated photograph believed to have been taken around 1900 reveals the shadow of a bell, but this is the only photograph that shows St. James as it looked during its first generation of existence. Currently efforts are underway to restore much of the church, in an effort to replicate how St. James looked in its early years. Moreover, as members have attempted to have St. James registered as a historic church (Cyrus Sutherland first competed an application for this on behalf of the church in 1980), it has become increasingly important to determine what the structure of the church looked like, as well as when the congregation began to worship at the present location. The original attempt to have the church listed as a historic place was denied, although this had as much to do with the policy of the National Historic Registry at the time as it did with the church's application.

During the twentieth century St. James remained a small congregation, yet one that continued to play a vital role for African Americans living in Fayetteville—presiding over weddings and funerals, picnics and holidays. In the 1940s St. James began to install stained glass windows in honor of important members. The north window pays tribute to A. L. Buchanan, who served as pastor from 1946 to 1961; the east window was dedicated in memory of James Hoover.[52] A mural painted in 1995 alongside the old Fayetteville Public Library depicts the church, suggesting its intrinsic role in the community, as well as celebrating Hoover, one of St. James's most stalwart members. A longtime janitor at the Fayetteville City Hospital, Hoover gradually became an indispensable contributor to local medicinal practice. Displaying a keen understanding of human anatomy and an uncanny knack for locating bone fractures, Hoover ultimately became an aide to doctors treating broken bones. As local physician A. J. Harrison recalled in a 1967 article, "James Hoover knows the human bone

structure as well as any doctor. It is never necessary for me to take an X-Ray picture of a broken bone. He can tell where the bone is broken by feeling and setting it perfectly."[53]

Hoover's daughters, Theressa and Minerva, grew up in the church and became active members. Theressa, born in 1925, earned a bachelor's degree from Philander Smith College, received a master's degree in religion from New York University, and later went on to become Assistant General Secretary for Christian Missions of the United Methodist Church. She was also once named one of the seventy-five most important women in America, and in 1964 was appointed as the UMC's Secretary of the Department of Social Relations of the Women's Division of Christian Service.[54] For several years she also served on the board of the YWCA. Theressa and her sister Minerva also engaged in missionary and relief work in Africa.[55] The Hoovers lived in Fayetteville during the years after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision reshaped public education in America. For St. James, the Great Society programs of the 1960s also represented a major transition, as the church became a center for Head Start programs, and an integrated community nursery. Indeed, the history of St. James has been one of interracial cooperation, in terms of the initial emergence of the congregation, as well as the civil rights movement. In fact, as Theressa Hoover has observed, the church has never been a place that harbors racial discord. "I've always had a very healthy sense of sense of self," she once remarked. "Prejudices were the other guy's problem, not mine. It just represents a cultural and political lag in America."[56]

In order to help improve race relations in the community in the wake of the social change brought on by the *Brown* decision, St. James began to hold annual meetings to discuss the civil rights movement and exchange ideas. Dubbing the event Race Relations Day (later known as Martin Luther King Day), these meetings were first held in February 1954 and continued until 1977. Typically, St.

James would exchange ministers and choirs with other congregations in an effort to reach out to other churches.

Minerva Hoover was in many respects the anchor for St. James. As sociologist Gordon Morgan (a member and later lay minister of the church as well as one of its chroniclers) recalled in 1992, Minerva Hoover "was a peacemaker, able to keep down factionalism...within the church and thereby to promote its work...she was a tremendous force in getting small things and large things done."[57]

In the 1950s and 1960s St. James expanded its duties, organizing a community nursery in the church basement for its members in 1950, with Rosetta Dowell as its first director. This program would continue for many years, and by 1970 it had become fully integrated, serving the neighborhood. The nursery's records for 1967 indicate that it took care of just fewer than sixty families, for a charge of $3.00 per child per week. To maintain it, the nursery program received $1700 that year from the United Way.[58] It also took in support from private donations. Teachers at the nursery were paid $36 per week. By 1968 this nursery had become a Head Start program, which considerably increased its funding and its scope.[59] The church also housed Fayetteville's first Free Health Clinic, founded by longtime church member Jessie Bryant.

In 1968 St. James officially joined the United Methodist Church (UMC). After holding a meeting at the Methodist retreat located atop Fayetteville's Mount Sequoyah, St. James pastor H. A. Davie announced in October of that year that the church had been asked to consider "the merging of our church into the [North Arkansas] Conference...of the United Methodist Church."[60] As Gordon Morgan notes in his sociological study of the church, there appears to have been no discussion of this, or at least no record of debate detailed in the church's meeting minutes. Regardless, the merger of St. James into the UMC marked another chapter in its history, as the congregation had been a member of the Northern

Methodist Church in its infancy, and from 1932 to 1968 had been affiliated with the Colored Methodist Church.

In the 1970s St. James continued to make improvements on the church, repairing a damaged roof in 1971, building a kitchen in the basement later in the decade, and maintaining the chapel which had by then served the community for over ninety years. In June 1979 the congregation managed to purchase an air-conditioning unit, and the church prepared for a major event, the 1980 Homecoming celebration held in August of that year. This brought together several generations of St. James, and the congregation celebrated some of its more notable members. Among the Homecoming's many events the poetry of former pastor Lewis Chesser was recited. Chesser, who had served from 1969–1974, wrote dozens of poems that often evoked the enduring, yet fulfilling struggle to maintain this old, noble church:

> All this rainy morning long I've stood
> In the drip off the bell tower eaves
> Trying to fix St. James' door. The wood's
> Scarred and painted and scarred again. The key's
> Too worn down to make the tumblers fall.[61]

By the early 1980s St. James had roughly seventy-five active members, and the church continued to struggle to make ends meet. The North Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church provided approximately $13,000 annually, primarily to pay the pastor's salary. The congregation then typically raised an additional $5000 per year to help pay the pastor as well as to maintain the church and meet its expenses.[62] The 1980s was also a time of considerable change for the church, as it appointed its first female pastor, Jeanette Saxton, in 1986. Saxton served for one year, alongside Carlos Summers. The following year, St. James appointed another woman to the post, Tumani Nyajeka. The first woman ordained as a Methodist minister in post-colonial

Zimbabwe, Nyajeka studied at Cambridge University in England and earned a master's degree in divinity from Duke University. After returning to Zimbabwe for several years, she heard of an opening for the pastor's position at far-flung St. James United Methodist Church. After serving for a year, Nyajeka was replaced in 1989 by another woman, Sara Bainbridge.

In the 1990s and into the twenty-first century St. James continued its role as a strong presence in the black community and also adapted to the demographic changes that have occurred throughout Northwest Arkansas. The neighborhood around St. James increasingly has become the home of Hispanics, many of whom have come to this area seeking jobs in poultry-processing plants. While the roster of St. James membership is still largely African American, recent pastors, such as current minister Gary Lunsford, have sought to reach out to the neighborhood's newest residents. As always, St. James continues to be a multicultural center, a place of worship that welcomes all.

At the turn of the century W. T. Fry was listed in the 1904 *Fayetteville City Directory* as a trustee and officer of the congregation. A member of the church since its early days, he represents one of the more instrumental figures in the history of St. James. As a brick mason in the early 1880s who took part in the construction of the chapel, Fry had risen to become an important member of the church. As Aldon Morris and others have noted, black churches could provide their members with a means of social mobility. [63] Black churches provided outlets for job possibilities, as well as a place to find spiritual refuge and communal support. What little the public record tells of W. T. Fry's life appears to confirm this assertion. Indeed, Fry was just one of many members of the St. James congregation who became integral parts not only of the church, but of the community as well.

As St. James approaches its 140th anniversary, it has begun to restore the chapel. Plans are underway to reconstruct the bell tower and to renovate the basement. Church members hope to finish

restoration of the bell tower by the end of 2005. Renovations are being made piecemeal, as Lunsford noted in a recent interview: "We're doing all this on faith," he remarked; "We started with a small amount of money, and it keeps trickling in. When it trickles in, we do the work."[64]

St. James United Methodist Church undergoes its latest changes as it continues to provide the same services it has since its inception. As church member Jessie Bryant recalled, the church "was a public place where leadership was taught."[65] This has proved to be correct, as St. James helped mold leaders such as Theressa Hoover. Indeed, it will undoubtedly continue to shape the community it has served for over a century. A congregation steeped in history, St. James can rightfully celebrate not only its endurance in the face of Reconstruction-era social strife, but also its profound contribution to the development of Fayetteville, its service to the African American community, and the future that lies ahead.

ENDNOTES

[1] The title derives from remarks made by Reverend Gary Barbaree (pastor of St. James, 1980–1982), August 10, 1980. Quoted in Gordon Morgan, *St. James United Methodist Church: Essays on a Small Congregation*, unpublished manuscript, 1992, 158. Also, the author wishes to thank Lorrie Bashor for granting access to her extensive research materials on the St. James congregation.

[2] *The Freeman*, April 15, 1893, quoted in Willard Gatewood, "Arkansas Negroes in the 1890s." *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXXIII, Spring, 1974, No. 1, 314.

[3] Ibid., 315.

[4] Nancy Britton, *Two Centuries of Methodism in Arkansas, 1800–2000* (Little Rock: August House Publishing, 2000), appendix, 323.

[5] Ibid., 324

[6] The 1904 *Fayetteville City Directory* notes that the church was established in 1869, just two years after the congregation asked the northern Methodist Conference to be supplied with a minister. See *Fayetteville City Directory*, 1904, St. James Methodist Church entry.

[7] See Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction* (New York: Harper Books, 1990), 32.
[8] *Goodspeeds, History of Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas* (Easley, S.C.: Southern Historical Press, 1978, a reprint of 1889 Chicago edition), 786.
[9] *1890 Population Census*, Washington County, Arkansas.
[10] *Flashback*, Nov. 1954, vol. IV, No. 6. See also, *1880-1900 Population Census*, Washington County, Arkansas. This decline in black population was mainly the result of a drop in agricultural areas, as Fayetteville's black community increased during the decade from 278 to 330.
[11] Morgan, 5.
[12] The practice of "jumping the broom," though rare, is still practiced in parts of the Ozark Highlands. For examples of similar folk traditions and practices, see Edward Morgan, *Black Hillbillies of the Ozarks* (Fayetteville: Department of Sociology, 1973); Brooks Blevins, *Hill Folks: A History of Arkansas Ozarkers and Their Image* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
[13] *The Grapevine,* March 10, 1977, Vol. III, No. 26, 1, 6. Though not mentioned in the historical records, St. James's earliest deed and mortgage documents refer to the area as the "Botefuhr" neighborhood, as do Methodist Episcopal Church Board of Extension grant documents.
[14] Edward Forrest Ellis, "Memoir," *Flashback*, May 1957, Vol. 7, No. 6, unpaginated copy, 1-6.
[15] *Goodspeeds*, 314.
[16] F.S. Root, "The Old Henderson School," *Flashback*, Nov. 1954, Vol. IV, No. 2, 39.
[17] W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Free Press, 1999), 190.
[18] Elmira Cooper and Lillian Gray, *WPA Interviews*, Works Progress Administration, Dec. 27, 1941, Arkansas Revision, Form 43, 1-6..
[19] Marriage Record (Colored), 1868, Washington County archives, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
[20] Britton, 324.
[21] James A. Anderson, *Centennial Fruits of Methodism, 1815-1935* (Benton, Ark.: L.B. White Printing Co., 1935), 101.
[22] Gatewood, 1974.
[23] *Fayetteville Echo*, Dec. 28, 1869, 1.
[24] *Arkansas Gazette*, Dec. 29, 1868, 3:1.
[25] *Fayetteville Echo*, 1.
[26] Anderson, 101.
[27] Quoted in Gatewood, 313.

[28] As local historian James A. Anderson put it in his essentially anti-northern study, *Centennial Fruits of Methodism, 1815-1935*, "the carpetbaggers had a gospel to preach to the Negroes. We soon saw that they were desperate to lead them away from us," 101.

[29] E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Press, 1974), 73.

[30] Minutes of the First Annual Session of the (Colored) Little Rock Conference, February 21, 1879, Library of Methodist Episcopal Church, General Commission Archives, Drew University, Morristown, NJ.

[31] Indeed, up to the present day, white ministers have continually presided over the St. James congregation.

[32] Minutes of the First Annual Session of the (Colored) Little Rock Conference, February 21, 1879, Drew Archives, Morristown, NJ. The first black Minister appointed to St. James was Elza Roberts, who took the position in 1875, and served for approximately one year.

[33] Walter N. Vernon, *Methodism in Arkansas, 1816-1976* (Little Rock: Joint Committee for the History of Arkansas Methodism, 1976), 117.

[34] Ellis Memoir, 1.

[35] Izola Preston, "Sam Young, Former Slave of Fayetteville," *Flashback*, May 1990, Vol. 40, No. 2, 32-35.

[36] S.B. Robertson, "1884 Official City Map of Fayetteville, Arkansas," blueprint, University of Arkansas Special Collections, No. 15-A.

[37] The murky origins of many churches in the region hamper attempts to ascertain which is the oldest, though St. James has been said to be the second oldest west of Mississippi River. See *Occasional Papers*, The United Methodist Historical Society of Arkansas, Inc., Fall 2000, Vol. 13, No. 2, which asserts that Mt. Olive United Methodist Church, of Van Buren, Arkansas, established in 1869, is the oldest congregation, west of the Mississippi River, still worshipping in its original structure.

[38] Grant to Build, "Kitchens Chapel," Methodist Episcopal Church of Philadelphia, Board of Church Extension, February 19, 1883; Washington County Archives, Fayetteville, Arkansas, Book J-2, 539.

[39] Ibid, 539.

[40] Appraisal, Kitchens Chapel, "List of Real Estate Subject to Taxation in Fayetteville, Washington County for the Year 1883,", Washington County archives, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 268. The appraisal was mistakenly undertaken, but for the researcher proves to be a benevolent accident, as it verifies the existence of the church, and the improvements made on that property. The county assessor erroneously charged St. James a thirteen dollar tax bill for the property, despite that fact that as a church, St. James was exempt from taxation on its property, and thus was ultimately not

required to pay this amount.

[41] Morgan 12.

[42] Robert D. Besom, "The Golden Age of Brick in Washington County," *Flashback*, August 1981, Vol. 31, 23.

[43] R.L. Polk & Co., *Polk's Fayetteville City Directory* (Dallas: Polk & Co.), 1904.

[44] *Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, Feb. 4, 1932, 1, 4.

[45] Ibid., 4. See also, *Goodspeeds*, 921.

[46] Lorraine Bashor, "Fayetteville Downtown Rotary Talk," Feb. 6, 2003, Lorraine Bashor private collection, 1-3.

[47] Besom, 23. While machine-made bricks were available by the early 1880s, the fact that these bricks were painted red suggests that they were professionally hand-fired.

[48] Morgan 14.

[49] Mortgage, St. James Chapel unto Byrnes and Blackmer; Lot 14, Butterfield ("Botefuhr") Addition, May, 1888, Washington County archives, Book W-2, 618.

[50] Morgan, 30.

[51] *Fayetteville Democrat Gazette*, "Courthouse Hit by Lightning," July 8, 1910, 1. See also, Britton, 102.

[52] Morgan, 157.

[53] Thomas Rothrock, "James Hoover," *Flashback*, August 1967, Vol. 17, no. 3, 17.

[54] *Springdale News*, April 24, 1964.

[55] *Northwest Arkansas Times*, Dec. 24, 1970, 2.

[56] *Dallas Morning News*, February 6, 1970. Quoted in Morgan, Homecoming 1980 files, 160.

[57] Morgan, 62.

[58] St. James Nursery Records, 1967, Lorraine Bashor private collection, Item 14, 4.

[59] Ibid., 4.

[60] Quoted in Morgan, 17.

[61] Quoted in Morgan, Homecoming 1980 files, 156. Chesser was one of a few poets who emerged over the years in the neighborhood surrounding St. James. Perhaps the most notable was George Ballard (1882–1951) who wrote poetry by memorizing verses while at work, then writing them out at night. Much of his work remains unpublished, but his poems provides a glimpse into the lives of African American in the 1920s, while touching on the issues of work, love, death, disease, and alcohol. Though not a member of St. James—he was a Baptist—Ballard was an important, well-known member of the so-called "Tin Cup" district. For more on Ballard, see the

Grapevine, March 10, 1977, vol. III, no. 26, 1, 6.

[62] Morgan, 73. See also, William S. Campbell, *One Hundred Years of Fayetteville, 1828–1928* (Fayetteville: Washington County Historical Society, 1977), 76.

[63] Aldon Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movements* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 96–98.

[64] Heidi Stambuck, "Bell to Ring Again," *The Morning News*, April 2, 2005, E1,10.

[65] *Northwest Arkansas Times*, March 19, 2005, A6.

OLD SCHOOL HOUSES
WHAT IS THEIR FATE?

LLOYD O. WARREN

In the geographical area now known as Arkansas, the first schools were church schools conducted under the direction of the Jesuits, who abandoned their efforts shortly before the Louisiana Purchase by the United States. Subsequent to the Purchase and following the establishment of the Territory of Arkansas in 1819, mission boards and other church organizations established schools. In 1829 the Territorial Legislature passed the first law relative to public education in the Territory of Arkansas designating the 16th section of land within each township for the support of educational purposes and requiring the county judge to appoint a trustee to oversee each such section.

In the early history of Arkansas as a territory and later in statehood, immigrants moving into the Washington County area were interested in providing educational opportunities for their children. The earliest known school was established at Cane Hill in 1835. A number of other institutions followed the Cane Hill School, but many did not exist for long, and others did not survive the Civil War. Cane Hill College experienced much difficulty but served its function until 1891. The building that housed the college still exists at Cane Hill and is used as a community center. It is on the National Register of Historical Buildings.

Lloyd Warren is a native of Washington County and received his elementary education at the one-room Son's Chapel school. He obtained his B.S. and. M.S. in education at the U of A and a Ph. D. In entomology from Kansas State University. He retired from the U of A as emeritus professor in 1986. He has since written articles on area churches and local personalities.

Officials of the territorial and later the state government gave lip service to the need of a public school program in the state. In 1843 the General Assembly decreed that school districts would be identified by township location. This system was abused and not utilized appropriately by the state and county governments. Most significantly the state government failed to adequately fund a program of public education before or after the Civil War. Thus subscription and private schools were very important in meeting the educational needs of a community. From 1829 to 1853 the state government left with the county courts the authority to control all matters concerning the public schools. In 1853 the legislature established the office of County Common School Commissioner, establishing a pattern of state control that existed into the first half of the 20th century. Due to limited financial resources provided by the state and counties, by 1860 common schools were reported in only forty of the seventy-five counties. The number ranged from two in Yell County to fifty-seven in Washington County. In 1867 the post-Civil War legislature decreed that school district boundaries be conterminous with the political townships. With the adoption of the postwar constitution in 1874, school districts were to be organized around a community center concept rather than on a township basis. This resulted in formal organization of Washington County schools into districts in 1884. Ultimately a total of 171 school districts were organized in Washington County. Unfortunately the date of 1884 is given as the date of establishment of many county schools that were already functioning under previous legal authority. The number reflects the number established over a period of time, as merging of districts in the less populated areas was not uncommon and by the 1948–1949 years consolidation of schools reduced the number of districts to eight.

OLD SCHOOLHOUSES

The structures housing school activities were seldom pretentious. During the early years of the state's history more often then not patrons of the school constructed the buildings, which were of logs or of simple frame construction. Regardless of structure and size the schoolhouse was almost always the center of community activities and more often than not was used also for religious services. School programs were also housed in church buildings. Financial support was based on the number of enrollees within the district. Many districts were thinly populated and thus were not qualified for funding adequate to sustain educational programs. Prior to World War II many districts merged in order to have resources to support the school program. During the war years 1942–1946, school districts lost enrollment due to population shift and other factors such as better transportation resources, roads, etc. In the 1940s state and county officials stressed the need of merging the smaller outlying districts into larger school systems. In 1949 patrons did not always favor the consolidation of small schools with low enrollment into larger programs, as they feared the loss of the community center. In some cases, after consolidation, outlying schools were kept open as "wing" schools for a period of time until facilities were provided to accommodate the increase in student numbers.

Merging of districts led to vacating and perhaps abandoning the building that had served as the community center for school, church and other social functions. Because they were a capital investment, communities sought to find beneficial uses for the vacant structures. Some were sold to individual citizens and others were bought by entities organized to save the building for community activities. What follows are results of some visits to the locations of former Washington County district schools to gather information on how their buildings are used today.

Son's Chapel School, Washington County District 4

The identity of Son's Chapel community was established in 1852 when Michael Son and wife Nancy Jane gave a tract of land to the Protestant Methodist Church. According to early accounts a log house was situated on this property. Besides serving as a building for church services, it provided a facility for subscription or private schools that served educational needs of the community. No information is known about educational programs during the Civil War.

Following the Civil War the Washington County Court on October 16, 1868, ordered that school districts be established on a township basis. In the October term of court in 1869 tax funds were made available to District 4. This action indicates that the common school concept was implemented in the Son's Chapel community about 1869–1870. Sketchy records pertaining to school directors and financial allotments exist for the period 1873 to 1883. Up to 1885 the school district owned no property; the church building also served as the school. In 1885 H. H. Alexander and wife deeded to the school district a strip of land lying along the north side of the original grant made by the Sons in 1852. About 1890 the County Court authorized the construction of a new building for the school. This building replaced what was probably the original log structure built for the church in the 1850s. The new building served the Methodists as a meeting place until the Rural Builders constructed the present community center in the 1930s. On dissolution of District 4 in 1949 the land and schoolhouse were sold to the Rural Builders Club that in turn sold the structure to a buyer, who moved it a few hundred feet to the

northwest. It was converted to a dwelling house, a function it continues to serve in 2005.

Braden School, Washington County District 9

School activity was said to have existed in the community that came to be known as Braden prior to 1878. The official date of establishment was July 5, 1878. Where the school sessions were held prior to 1878 is not known. But one could surmise that subscription or private schools were held in the area. Tradition identifies the location of one school site at the northeast sector of the former Skillern property and east of Rom Apple Road. This writer was familiar with the location, as residual evidences of the structure persisted for many years prior to the current development of the area. In 1884 Robert F. Braden donated an acre of land on which a one-room school building was constructed. This site is now the location of the Arvest Center at the intersection of SR45 and Crossover Road.

In the early 1900's student numbers increased and a second room was added to the original room to accommodate the increase in student numbers. William Huddleston, a local carpenter and John A. Skillern provided labor for the construction of the additional room. The building became the community center and was used for other events other than school activities. From 1936 to 1946 the building was used by Braden Missionary Baptist Church. The church dissolved and the membership affiliated with other nearby churches. In 1949 Braden School District merged into Fayetteville District 1. The school property was purchased by Karl Greenhaw. It was used as a meeting place for the First Freewill Baptist Church of Fayetteville. After a period of growth the church acquired land west of Crossover Road north of. the school building. The former schoolhouse was moved to the new site and was used as a sanctuary until a new facility was

constructed. A quick-service facility known as "Hot Wheels," and one or two other businesses were constructed on the now vacant site. Later these buildings were supplanted by the Arvest center. The original wooden structure was demolished after serving the district as a community center for more than sixty years.

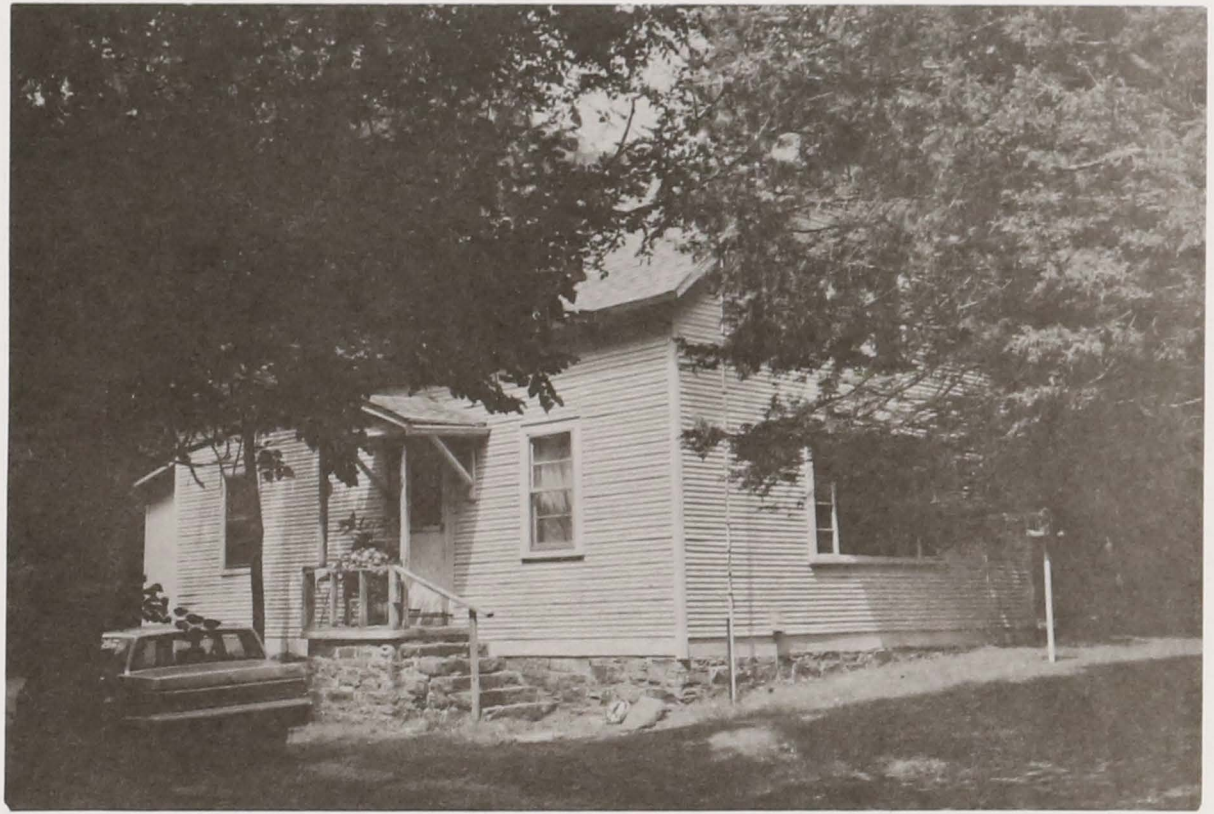
Zion School, Washington County District 11

The Zion community is located about seven and one-half miles northeast of Fayetteville and five miles southeast of Springdale. The Zion school had its origin in the period 1848–1850, when a log cabin with dirt floors was built on land referred to as the Lemon's or Rariden farm about one and one-half miles east of the current location of the existing church and school buildings at the intersection of Old Wire and Zion Roads. Seats for the congregation were of split logs that doubled as desks for students who attended the community's first school. Following the organization of the Methodist church, a better structure was constructed circa 1857 for the church and school activities on land donated by Lee Blakemore. Private schools were held in the building as early as 1867 and following years until the organization of the common school in 1883. Persons who taught in the building included John Phillips, A. J. Hale, J. R. Moneyhun, Mack Davis and Emma Hale. In 1897 a portion of the church land was deeded to the district for a separate building. The one room building soon proved too small as student numbers grew. A second room was added to the building. In about 1925 the building underwent minor renovation to a configuration that characterizes the building in 2005. In 1949 the district merged into Springdale District 50. The building and adjacent land were purchased by the Zion-Oak Grange. The building is used for

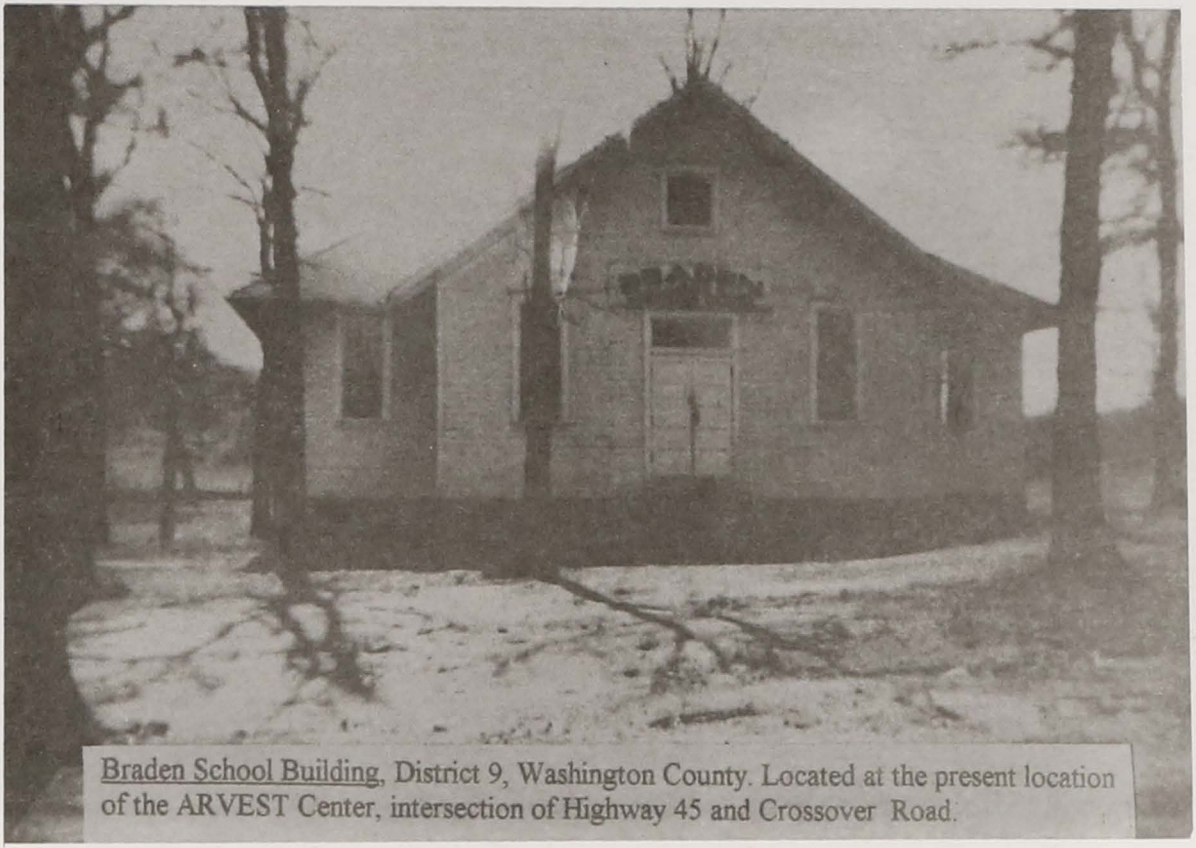
community functions such as family and group reunions, thus retaining the concept of a community center.

Mount Comfort School, Washington County District 34

The identity of Mount Comfort as a community was established in the late 1820s, when William D. Sullivan donated seven acres for a church. The church was organized in August 1830 and named Mount Comfort after the church the settlers had left in Tennessee. The first church building was made of logs with split logs for bench seats. The settlers were interested in educating their youth, and by 1840 two pioneer ministers, Cephas Washburn and Robert Mecklin, arrived in the area and organized the Far West Seminary. In 1840 the congregation replaced the log building with a brick structure to serve both religious and educational programs. The Seminary experienced financial problems, and creditors forced a sheriff's sale in 1847 to satisfy the indebtedness. Mecklin, who had organized the Ozark Institute, a prep school, in 1845, bought the former Seminary property to enlarge the Ozark Institute. The Institute was a school for males. An institution for females, Mount Comfort Female Seminary, was established by Ann James in 1848. The Seminary classes met in the brick church building. Three years later in 1857, James married and her departure from the community resulted in the closing of Mount Comfort Seminary. It was reestablished as a female division of the Ozark Institute. The Institute closed during the Civil War and both the Confederate and the Union Armies used some of the buildings as hospitals. Classes resumed after the war, but on the establishment of the University of Arkansas in 1871, the Institute finally dissolved. When the original Mount Comfort School building was built is not known. There is a reference to the building being put on rollers and moved elsewhere for use as a dwelling. In 1916 the current building was



Son's Chapel School District 4 building transformed into a dwelling. (All photos courtesy the author.)

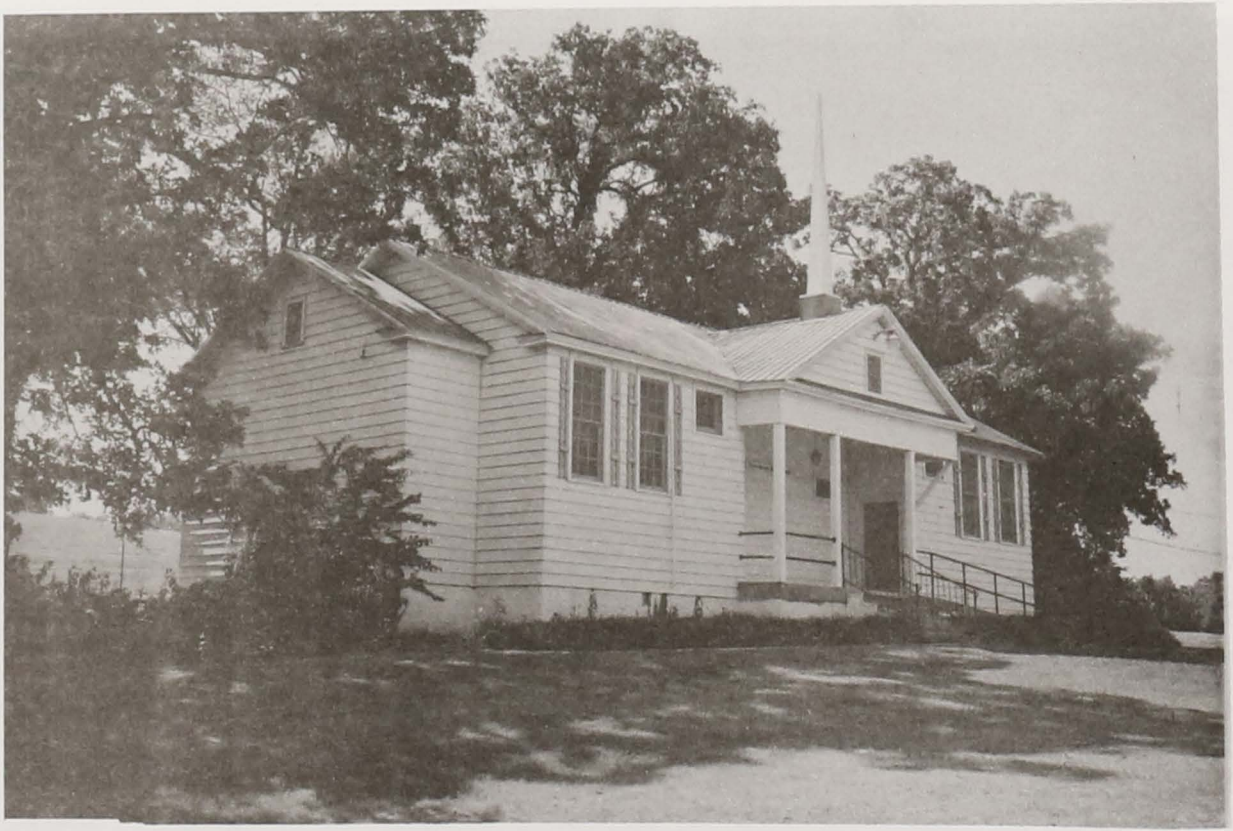


Braden School Building, District 9, Washington County. Located at the present location of the ARVEST Center, intersection of Highway 45 and Crossover Road.

Zion School district 11 building. Now Used as a community center and by the Zion-Oak grange.

Mount Comfort School District 34 building. It now serves as a fellowship hall for the Mount Comfort Presbyterian Church.

Shady Grove School District 36 building. Once used for minor business activities, it is now vacant and a candidate for demolition.

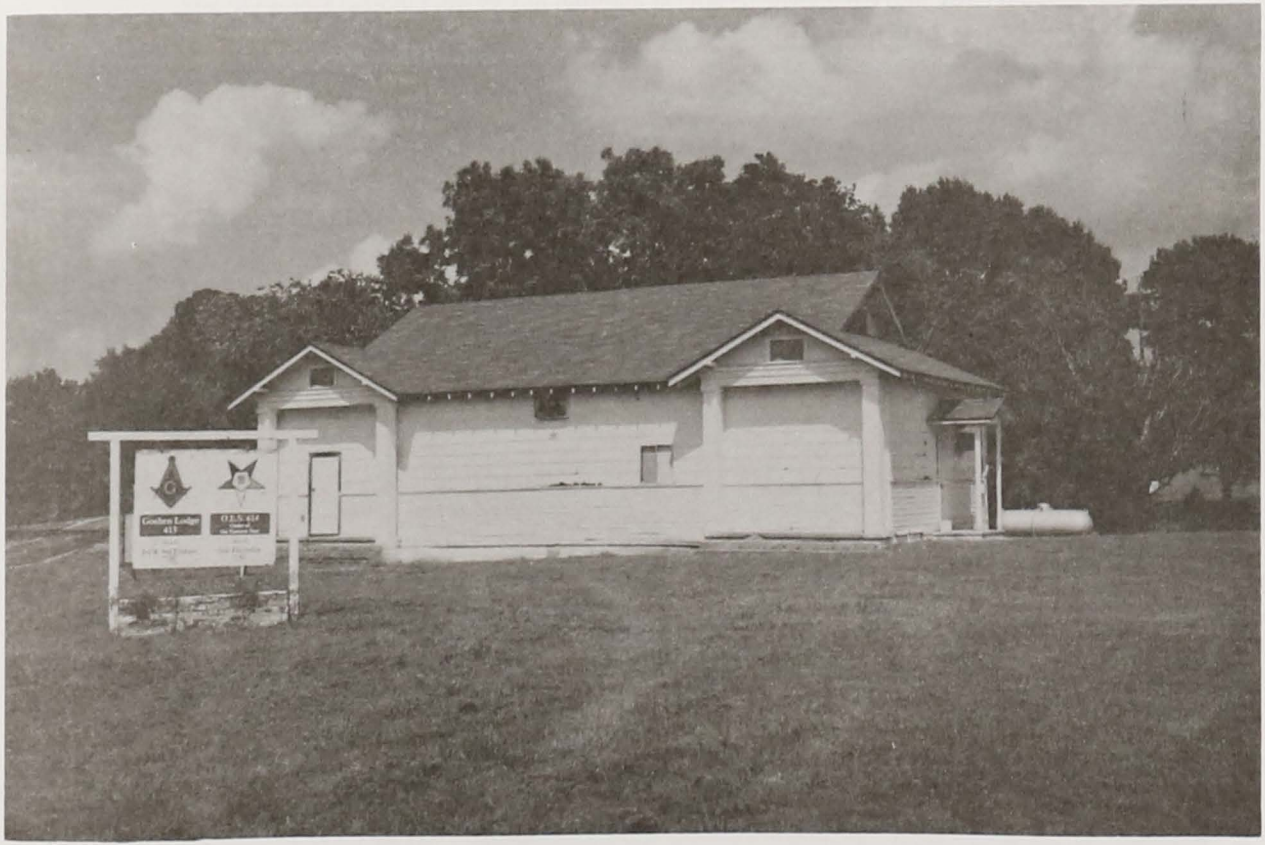


Howe School Building, District 44. Now the home of Howe-Savoy Bible Church.

Fishback School District 68 building, now the sanctuary for the Regular Baptist Church.

Thomas School District 73 building, now home to Thomas-Lake View Bible Church.

Salem School District 84 building. Out of use and in need of repair.



The Goshen School District 108 building now serves as a community center.

The Sycamore School District 100 building is now an abandoned relic from the past.

constructed. In 2005 it serves as an excellent fellowship hall for the Mount Comfort Presbyterian Church.

Shady Grove School, Washington County District 36

Available records show that educational programs in the Shady Grove district began as the Clear Creek Academy in an area now occupied by the Northwest Arkansas Mall. Drinking water was obtained from the Bridenthal Springs, located near the south end of the US Highway 71 bridge over Clear Creek. The academy closed in the early 1870s for lack of support. The Shady Grove School district was established following the Civil War, but where classes were conducted is not known. In 1885 land at the junction of Shady Grove Road and US Highway 71 was obtained from the Pierson family for the school; construction of a two-room building followed in 1901. This served the school district until 1960, when the students and teachers moved to the new Westwood School in Springdale. The 1901 school building is noted for the unique bell tower and entryway. Following closure and sale of the school building, various businesses have occupied it. Now painted a deep red, the building has, in 2005, become a landmark on the west side of US 71.

Howe School Washington County District 44

The Howe School District was established in 1883. The land area included much of the area now enclosed by the Lake Wedington Project. The building is located west of the intersection of SR16 and the Prairie Grove Road on land deeded to the district by Andrew Howe for educational and religious purposes. The one-room school survived until 1947, when the school merged into the Prairie Grove District 23. The building

now houses the Howe-Savoy Bible Church. The church has added an outdoor pavilion for fellowship functions.

Fishback School Washington County District 68

Efforts to establish a school in the Fishback community began about 1878. The boundaries established by the district were approved by the county court in 1885. J. O. Graham and Thompie Boyd gave the land on which to locate the school building. The site is about two miles southeast of Springdale on what is called (erroneously) the Butterfield Coach Road. In 1915 the original one-room school building was divided with a cloth curtain stretched across the room to accommodate increased enrollment. Unfortunately the curtain was too close to the pot-bellied stove; this resulted in the curtain catching fire and the loss of the building. The structure was replaced with a two-room building that is used in 2005 by the Regular United Fishback Baptist Church and as a community center.

District 68 was annexed to Springdale District 50 in June 1949. The Springdale School District continued to use the building as a wing school until 1959 when teachers and students were moved into Springdale school facilities.

Thomas School Washington County District 73

This schoolhouse is located at the junction of Wheeler-Tontitown Road and Arbor Acres Road. The community is known also as the Steele Community after a prominent family that settled in the area. In 1870 John and Elizabeth Thomas deeded to the district two acres of land for educational and religious purposes. The family's gift was recognized by identifying the school with

the name Thomas. The original schoolhouse was a small one-room frame building. It was replaced circa 1912 with a larger structure that served the school until it annexed to Springdale District 50 in 1948. The building now serves a church organization as well as a community center.

Salem School Washington District 84

The Salem Community is located about two miles north of Mount Comfort Road at the intersection of CR 893 and 894. When a school was first organized in the community is not known. County records show that land was purchased from Jacob and Ryetta Johnson in October 1878 on which a schoolhouse was built. The district was unable to meet state enrollment standards; thus the district petitioned for annexation into Fayetteville District 1 in May 1949. The property was sold into private ownership. The owner allowed the building to be used as a community center and by the Church of the Nazarene. The building (in 2005) is undergoing considerable decay. What was once a community center will eventually cease to exist.

Goshen School Washington County District 108

Goshen School was located about nine miles east of Fayetteville on State Road 45. The community is an area settled by immigrants soon after Arkansas became a territory. Following the Civil War subscription schools provided educational programs. A Mr. Parker was a teacher in this program. Some records exist that indicate that there was a "common" school here as early as 1881. The schoolhouse was a large two-story frame building. The upper floor was used for lodge meetings. When this building was demolished in 1921–1922, much of the salvaged lumber was used by Elliott L. Warren to build a house in the

Son's Chapel community. Subsequently William T. Blake and his son, Orion, constructed a one-story school building. Following annexation with Fayetteville School District 1 in 1949 the building underwent some renovation and is now used for community affairs and lodge meetings.

Sycamore School, Washington County District 100

The Sycamore School was near the banks of Clear Creek about one-half mile northwest of the former post office and store in the community of Wheeler. Agnes Blew, a former teacher, reported that prior to the Civil War a school building stood not far from the post-Civil War school. John and Ora Belle Rollins deeded land to the district for the new location to be used for school and religious purposes. The final building for the school was built early in the 19th century. The Sycamore Missionary Baptist Church met in the building from 1917 to 1947, when the congregation moved to a new building east of the village center. Fayetteville District 1 annexed the district two years later, and students and teachers were transported to larger facilities. For a time other religious groups used the former school building that had served for many years as a community center. It served also as a meeting place for a Fox Hunters' Club. Over time the building was vandalized so badly that it was abandoned, and it became a ruined artifact by the side of the creek.

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SKELTON VS. SHELTON
THE VERDICT IS IN

DWAIN H. SKELTON

Late in the seventeenth century there were two separate and distinct families from Europe who settled in the American colonies. One family was surnamed Skelton and the other Shelton. Which came first is not known for sure. Since literacy was far from universal in those days, many people had to dictate information for legal papers, leaving it to the scribe to guess at the spelling of names.

For many decades, genealogists have attempted to identify the parents of William Skelton, who was born about 1745 in Virginia and died about 1825 in Indiana. To date that effort has been unsuccessful. However, because William and Sarah, his wife, named one of their sons Ralph, several of the Shelton Clan of Virginia have claimed William Skelton as a descendant of Ralph Shelton who was born in Middlesex County, Virginia, about 1710. Much toil and trouble has been expended and articles and even entire chapters in books have been published developing circumstantial evidence in support of the claim made by those of the Shelton Clan.

Perhaps most notable of those writings are those of Mrs. Mildred Campbell Whitaker of Saint Louis, Missouri. She is reported to have said, "I found several branches of my own family hanging from the Skelton Tree, where they had been for many generations." She supports her findings with excerpts from records in which names and even some signatures have been so poorly written that it is difficult to distinguish and Sk from an Sh.

Dwain Skelton wrote the family history of his grandmother, Perlina Jane Stufflebeam Skelton, for the Winter 2003 issue of *Flashback*. He and his wife, Betty Anderson Skelton, grew up in Springdale and now live in Easton, Kansas.

Many others have fallen victim to circumstantial evidence and some have submitted their Shelton Pedigrees containing my great-great-great-grandfather, William Skelton, to the Mormon Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, where they have been published as true.

We Skelton men who descended from William Skelton and Sarah, his wife, through any of their sons, have been hanging from the Ralph Shelton Family Tree for decades, convicted by the court of popular opinion with only circumstantial evidence. But now DNA technology has freed us, just as it has proven the innocence of many death row prisoners.

DNA samples were collected from two Skelton males, both of whom can document their ancestry back to William Skelton who was born about 1745 in Virginia. Samples had already been collected from several dozen Shelton males who were documented back to Ralph Shelton and other Virginia Sheltons of the early eighteenth century.

The coordinator of the Shelton/Skelton, DNA project, conducted by Family Tree DNA, recently stated through e-mail to all project members, " The Skeltons match each other but they do not match any of the Sheltons." The Most Recent Common Ancestor (MRCA) for the two Skeltons goes back seven generations. So if DNA evidence can free a man from death row, it can certainly shake me out of a Shelton Family Tree. This decision impacts all descendants of William Skelton and Sarah, his wife, through their male descendants: Robert I, Jacob, John, James, Zachariah, Ralph, William, and Robert II. We are hereby declared to be thoroughbred Skeltons and our pedigree is pure, removing our names from The Ralph Shelton Family Tree. As Cousin Red Skelton always said when closing his show, "God bless."

COMMENT FROM A READER

After reading Bob Keen's article, "Visiting the Bean Carnahan Cemetery," in the Winter 2005 issue of *Flashback,* Rev. Robert E. L. Bearden wrote the following:

I appreciated Bob Keen's article and was surprised and delighted to see the photo of Captain Jacob Pyeatte's stone and to learn he was a captain in General (then Colonel) George Rogers Clark's Illinois Regiment Virginia State Troops in the Revolutionary War.

Clark learned, while living in Kentucky Territory, that the British Army had recently garrisoned a fort at Vincennes and was either already or near doing the same at Kaskaskia and Cahokia on the Mississippi River. This could mean the British would claim the entire northwest territory (now the states of Michigan, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio), adding it to Canada . In 1778 Clark petitioned Gov. Patrick Henry of Virginia and the House of Delegates for permission to raise a militia unit in an effort to drive the British out and later establish Continental troops. He enrolled 175 Virginia volunteers. After traveling west by river and overland, they occupied Kaskaskia in Illinois country. From there they marched to Vincennes in the bitter cold winter of 1778–1779, where they surprised the British, who surrendered. Many historians believe this small "regiment" saved this vast territory for the United States.*

Here is one of the most brilliant feats of arms in American history, and one of the officers, Capt. Jacob Pyeatte, was later a Washington County citizen.

Albert Cowan, one of my antecedents, was a private in this unit. William Clark of the Lewis and Clark voyage of discovery was George Rogers Clark's younger brother.

*See *A Company of Heroes: The American Frontier, 1775–1783* by Dale Van Every.

DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS 2005

At its annual meeting on October 2, 2005, the Washington County Historical society awarded certificates to C. W. and Ann Webb and Phillip W. Steele acknowledging their contributions to regional history.

The Webbs have assembled extensive collections of historical artifacts beginning as early as pre-Revolutionary War times. As experts in the history and use of these rare and valuable items, they gladly share their collections with the citizenry through exhibits and talks at almost every historic site in Northwest Arkansas, as well as schools and civic groups. C. W. portrays a Confederate soldier; Thomas Drew, Arkansas's third governor; and Gen. Benjamin McCulloch in Washington County Historical Society living history programs. Ann dresses in Civil War costume as she explains Victorian mourning customs and cooking practices of the 1700s and 1800s. Their presentations for WCHS placed them in the Diamond category of the Society's volunteer group, Dandylions and Diamonds.

Phillip W. Steele's interest in regional history goes back to his youth, when he spent a great deal of time on his grandparents' White River farm. It was there that he often heard and learned to appreciate dozens of Ozark tales and legends. Realizing such stories were seldom written down, he began recording such tales during his college years. This interest grew to become newspaper articles, a dozen published books, and documentary films. He is cofounder of the James-Younger Gang Historical Society, past president of the National Association for Outlaw and Lawman History, member of Western Writers of America, and past president of Friends of the James Farm.

At the awards luncheon Steele issued a call for persons interested in a hands-on study of regional history to get in touch with him. His email address is phillip@phillipwsteele.com.

Index to Volume 55

A E F Confectionery, 117
Adams-Davies, Edith, 22
Alexander, H. H., 182
Algire & Pitkin, 13
Algire, Willard, 13
Allen Canning, 103, 110
Allen, H. F., 119
Anderson, Ada, 68
Andrews, William, 163
Andy Handy, 136
Appleby Brothers, 32, 109
Appleby, George, 60
"Arkansas and Washington County 100 Years Ago," by Patrick G. Williams, 92–102
Arkansas Farmers Hatchery, 35
Armour & Co., 118
Armstrong, Mrs. R. B., 132
Ashby Grocer Co., 116
Askew, George H., 117
"Attorney's Letter for the Time Capsule, An" by W. W. "Bill" Bassett, 141–157
Aviles, Lorel D., 80

Babcock, Charles W., 132
Bainbridge, Sara, 173
Baker & Bishop, 113
Baker, George, 51
Baker, H. L., 56
Baker, J. L., 64
Bandini, Peter, quoted, 101
Bar Association of Washington County, history of, 141–157
Barnes, Emily, 11
Barnes, G. W., 119
Bassett, W. W. "Bill," "An Attorney's Letter for the Time Capsule," 141–157
Bates Brothers Market, 117, 121, 128, 135
Bates, Joe R., 135
Bates, John Stephen, 135
Baum & Brothers, 114
Bean, Mark, 42
Bearden, Robert E. L., 204
Beardon, Helma, photo, 65
Bennett, Cecil R., 120
Bennett, Dick, 120
Bennett, Ruby Campbell, 120
Bennett, Ruth Campbell, 120
Bentley & Keeler, 29, 119
Berry, Millard, 52–56, 81, 103
Billingsley, John, 42–43, 48
Bishop & Boyer, 113
Bishop, William Walker, 54
Black & Son Grocery, 133
Black, Keith, 77
Black, R. S., 119
Black, W. M., 113
Blackmer, Shepherd, 167, 168
Blackwell and Bros., 114
Blake, Orion, 199
Blake, William T., 199
Blakely, John L., 114
Blakemore, Lee, 184
Bland & Webb, 119
Blevins, Brooks, quoted, 97–98
Blevins, Vol, 42, 48
Blew, Agnes, 200
Bob White Pastry Shop, 121
Bogert, H. K., 121
Bohe, Anna, 121

Bohe's Grocery, 134
Boles, Clem, 54
Botefuhr district, 162, 165, 167
Botts Speedway Foods, 131, 132
Bowers, A. C., 114
Boyd, T. J., 117
Boyd, Thompie, 198
Bozarth, W. M., 114
Braden Missionary Baptist Church, 183
Braden, Robert F., 183
Braden School 183–184, 187
Bradley, D. B., 5
Brennan Boyd Construction Co., 73
Bronson, B. B., 64
Bronson, Mrs. B. B., photo, 65
Brooks, Fred, 119
Brough, Charles, 97
Brough, Charles Hillman, quoted, 19
Brower, Alonzo James, 22
Brower, J. P., 14, 22–23, 29
Brower, Miriam Anata Stanford, 22
Brower Walnut Veneer and Lumber Co.,7, 13, 22, 36
Brown, Jeff D., 100
Brown, Kent, quoted, 113
Brown, R. L., 120, 129
Brumfield, Roy, 146
Bryant, Jessie, 171, 174
Buchanan, A. L., 169
Budd, Arthur, 23
Budd, Elmer. A., 23–24
Budd Post and Hardwood Co., 24
Budd, Rose, 23
Burkey, Dr. Frederick, 8
Burlington Northern Railroad, 36
Butt, John, 68
Butt, Thomas F., 68, 78, 143, 146
Butterfield, John, 1
Butterfield Stage Line, 1–2
Byrnes, Albert M., 5, 54, 55, 167, 168
Byrnes Lumber Co., 6

Cahokia, 204
Cain Canning Factory, 110
Campbell, Denele Pitts, "Fayette Junction: Hub of Washington County's 1885–1935 Timber Boom," 1–41; "Fayetteville's Grocery Stores: 1830–2005," 111–140
Campbell, Evalee McCurdy, 120; photo,126
Campbell, Evertt, 120, 129, 131, 133; photo, 126
Campbell, J. C., Grocery137, 138; photo, 127
Campbell, John William, 111–112, 115, 118, 120
Campbell, Opal Rutherford, 120, 137
Campbell Soup, 118
Campbell, Sylvia Davis, 129
Campbell, Thomas, J., 52
Campbell, W. C., quoted, 14, 22
Campbell, W. S., quoted, 5
Campbell, Zachariah, 120, 128,129
Campbell's Cash Groceries, 120
Campbell's Super Market, 131–132, 138; photo, 126
Cane Hill School, 179
Cantrell, S. T., 30
Carlisle, Poley, photo, 122
Carnahan, Jane, 42
Carnahan, John, 42, 45, 46, 48
Carson, Gerald, quoted, 112

Carte, Reuben, 115
Carter, Witt, 68
Cassell, Harold Davey, 87
Cate, Lloyd D., 121
Cate, O. C., 118
Caudle, E. T., 103
Caudle, George F., 67
"'Celebration of Endurance, A': Fayetteville's St. James United Methodist Church," by Brent E. Riffel, 159–178
Central Food Market, 121,
Champion Fruit, 118
Champion News Co., 117
Charles W. Berry & Co., 19
Charlesworth, Calona Yoes, 7
Charlesworth & Harrigan, 7
Charlesworth Hardwood Lumber Co., 6, 7
Charlesworth, Myrl Vesta, 7
Charlesworth, William, 7
Chesser, Lewis, 172
Church of the Nazarene, 199
City Bakery, 117
City Grocery, 121
City Lumber Co., 36
City Meat Market, 115
City Produce, 121
City Roller Mills, 118
Clark, Cal H., 118
Clark, George Rogers, 204
Clark, William, 204
Clarke, J. B., 119, 132
Clawson's Grocery, 129
Clear Creek Academy, 197
Clinton, Hillary Rodham, 76
Clinton, William Jefferson, 76
College Street Grocery, 133
Combs, William A., 137–138
Conant, T. P., 14
Conner, C. C., 116, 134; photo, 122
Conner, T. J., 121, 134
Conner, W. C. (Clint), 134; photo, 122
Consumer's Market, 128
Consumer's Market No. 2, 135
Cooper, Elmira, 163
"Courthouse Memories," 85–91
Courthouse mural, 62
Cowan, Albert, 204
Cowan, J. F., 134
Cowen Grocery, 121
Cox's Market, 121
Crippen, M. T., 119
Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 29–30
Cummings, L. Maupin, 68, 87, 143, 147–148, 15
Cunningham, L. B., 113
Cupps, Enos, 128
Curry, John O., 132

Dale Lumber Co., 5
Darling, Boyd J., 90–91
David, H. A., 171
Davidson, Kay, 133
Davidson's Food Store, 128, 135
Davies, Rev. Samuel Wilson, 22
Davis, Clayton M., 130
Davis Grocery, 130
Davis, Jeff, 96
Davis, Mack, 184
Davis, Paul, 85
Dealy, Charles, 133
Dever, Henry J., 128, 136
Dillon's, 137
Dinsmore, Hugh A., 56
"Distinguished Citizens 2005," 205
Dixie Cream Shop, 130
Dodd, Berl, 119
Donaghey, George, 52, 55–57, 60, 97; quoted, 91

Dorman, Bert, 129
Dorman, M. W., 114–115
Dowell Cemetery, 30
Dowell, H. J., 30
Dowell, J. E., 62
Dowell, Rosetta, 171
Dowell, W. E., 117, 128
Drake, Bill, 34
Drake, Ezra, 34
Drake, Rev. Jake, 34
Drake, Vida, 34
Dry & Welsh, 118
Duncan, Ellis, 8–10,13
Duncan, Samuel, 8–10
Duncan, W. R. R., 165
Dupree, John, 80

E. A. Budd Post Co. Dept. Store, 23
East Side Service Station, 129
Economy Grocery, 121
Edwards, Marilyn, 76
Ellis, Edward Forest, 162, 165
Evers & Jackson, 114

Fairway Store, 131
Fallin, Emma Caldonia, 13
Farmer's Exchange, 117
Farmers Market, 121, 134
Far West Seminary, 85
"Fayette Junction: Hub of Washington County's 1885–1935 Timber Boom," by Denele Pitts Campbell, 1–41
Fayette Junction Roundhouse, 30
Fayetteville and Little Rock line, 4
Fayetteville Canning Co., 108,109
Fayetteville Family Supply Store, 114
Fayetteville Feed & Fuel, 118
Fayetteville Lumber and Cement, 5
Fayetteville Poultry & Eggs, 116
Fayetteville Produce Co., 116
Fayetteville Roller Mills, 118
Fayetteville Wagon Wood Co., 6, 16, 17, 99
Fayetteville Warehouse Co., 36
"Fayetteville's Grocery Stores: 1830–2005," by Denele Campbell, 111–140
Fellows, T. J., 52
Ferguson, J. A. , 2, 6
Ferguson, J. Wallace, 12
Ferguson Lumber Co., 6
Finley & Johnson, 137
First Freewill Baptist Church, 183
Fishback School, 192, 198
Fletcher, Frank, photo, 65
Forbes, Edwin D., 130
Ford, Dora, 162
Forest Park Canning, 109–110
Fox Hunters' Club, 200
Free Health Clinic, 171
Freedman's Bureau, 162
Freedom Shrine, 77
Freeman, Arthur J., 118
Freeman Brothers, 118
Freeman, Harry E., 118
Frisco line, 3, 4, 10, 13, 18, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31
Frost, Mrs. W. J., photo, 65
Fry, W. T., 167, 173
Fulbright, J. William, 99
Fulbright, Jay, 99, 118
Fuller, William, 93
Fuller's Market, 135
Fuller's Sanitary Meat Market, 116–117

Gallus Hatchery, 35
George Cole Field, 36
Gibbs, John D., 132
Gibson, John, 72
Gibson, Mahlon, 87, 143
Gilbreath & Taylor, 116, 135
Glenwood Grocery, 133
Glofelty, Nelson, 12
Goff Brothers, 128, 134, 135
Golden Rule Grocery, 128
Gollaher, E. C., 117
Goshen School, 195
Graham Grocery and Market, 129
Graham, J. O., 198
Graham, S. S., 54, 55
Gray & Tunstill, 114
Gray's Grocery, 129
Greathouse Park, 28
Green Grocery, 137
Greenhaw, Karl, 183
Greer, Richard B., 69, 89–90
Gunn, Mary Ann, 80, 81, 141, 144, 147

Hale, A. J., 184
Hale, Emma, 184
Hamilton, A. C., & Co., 116, 134
Hammersley, Florence, photo, 65
Hammond Packing Co., 117, 118
Hammond Produce, 121
Hammontree, D. E., 119
Handy Grocery, 136
Hankins, Burl M., 136
Hanna, Harlan G., 133
Hannah, T. A., photo, 124
Hansard, C. O., 117
Harbison, D. M., 116
Hargis Canneries, 21, 31, 32, 34, 109
Hargis, Mildred, 33
Hargis, Peter Columbus "Lum," 33
Hargis, Pleasant, 33
Hargis, William Thomas "Tom," 32–33, 35
Harp's, 137, 139
Harper, B. F., 65; photo, 65
Harriman, Virginia C., 91
Harris, H. L., 116, 119
Harris, Oscar L, 134
Harrison, A. J., 169
Harrison, E. C., 119
Hawn, Olga, photo, 65
Heerwagen, Paul M., 60
Henderson, E. E., 162
Henderson School, 162, 163
Hendren, Jimm L., 150
Hendry, Alexander, 5
Henry, Patrick, 204
Hicks, John T., 56
Hill City Lumber Co., 2, 5
"Historic Washington County Courthouse, The," by Tony Wappel, 51–84
Hobbs Grocery, 136
Hodges, J. C., 113
Hog Haus Brewing Company, 135
Holcomb, Joseph S., 129
Holt, Mitchell, 21
Hoover, James, 169–170
Hoover, Minerva, 170, 171
Hoover, Theressa, 170, 174
Horton, George P., 114
Howe, Andrew, 197
Howe School, 197, 191
Howe-Savoy Bible Church, 191, 197
Huddleston, William, 183

Humphreys, T. S., 68
Hunt, J. B., 35
Hunton, Jerry, 79–80, 81
Hurst, G. W., 116
Hussey, John, 87
Hutchens, Alf, photo, 123

Ideal Grocery, 120
IGA Superstore, 139
IGA Thriftway Super Market, 130

J. H. Phipps Lumber Co., 6, 99
J. T. Eason and Co., 28
Jackson, C., & Co., 114
Jackson, T. U., 108
James, Ann, 185
Jameson, Paul E., 143
Jamison, Charlie, 134
Jeffery, Richard A., 119, 128
Jerpe Dairy Products Corp., 118
Jimmie Ford, 73
John W. Moll and Moll Brothers, 19
Johnson & Son, 132
Johnson, Charles, 77, 79, 87
Johnson, J. F., 116
Johnson, Jacob, 199
Johnson, Mrs. Everett, photo, 65
Johnson, Ryetta, 199
Johnson's Grocery, 133
Jones, Claiborne, 8
Jones, Jennie Tallent, 8
Jones, Sissieretta, 159
Jones, William Newton (Newt or W. N.), 6, 7, 8
Jordan, A., photo, 124

Karbe, A. W., Grocery, 134
Karnes, James, 12
Karnes, Mary Jane, 12
Kaskaskia, 204
Keen, Bob, "Visiting the Bean Carnahan Cemetery," 42–48; 204
Kelley Brothers Lumber Co., 5
Kennan, J. R., 91
Kilgore Grocery, 134
Kincaid, William R., 80
King Food Market, 121
King, H. C., 119, 121
King, Olive D., 121
King's Food Market, 128, 135
Kitchens Chapel, 166
Kitchens, Ulysses S., 165–166
Klinger, Timothy C., 80
Kroger Grocery & Baking Co., 128

Lackey Groceries, 116
Lackey, J. S., Produce Co., 116; photo, 123
Ladd, James F., 128
Lafayette Grocery, 129
Lancaster's Grocery, 133
Land, Earl, 130
Land, Jim, Grocery, 138
Lantrip & Miller, 116
Lantrip, L. B., 115
Lehman, Julius, 128
Lemke, W. J., 10–11
Leonard's Food Store, 138
Lester & Son, 117
Lester, Vol, 71, 72, 73, 74, 76
Levi Strauss plant, 34–35
Lewis & Sharp, 117, 118
Lewis, Bayless G., 120
Lewis, Elizabeth, 8
Lewis, G. W., 8
Lewis, Matilda, 8
Liles & Thomas, 113
Lilly, William, 117
Lindsay, Mark, 144
Lineberger, John, 76, 78, 143

Litteral Canning Co., 32
Little, G. W., 114
Lollar Grocery, 132
Long's Meat Market, 117
Luckett, Hattye, photo, 65
Lunsford, Gary, 173–174

Mac's Grocery, 136
Macey, Chas. P., 134
Mack, Jeane, 88
Maguire, Mrs. Green, photo, 65
Malloy, W. L., 159, 163
Maples, J. S., 64, 68
Marrs, Samuel, 51
Marshall Grocery, 136
Martin, Arthur L., 69–70, 71
Mashburn, Michael H., 144
Massie, J. C., 114
Matthews, Thos. A., 129
Maxwell, Anna Billingsley, 44, 48
Maxwell, William, 44, 48
Mayes, J. Frank, 10
Mayes, J. O., 121
Mayes, John F., 4, 6
Mayes, Mrs. Irvan, photo, 65
Mayes, Rev. John, 10
Mayes, Sarah McGhee, 10
Mayes, William Zarro, 10
McAdoo, America, 7
McCartney, Alexander, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21
McCartney, Norman, 21
McCartney-Lewis-Faucette, Inc., 21
McClanahan & Williams, 117
McConnell, George, 85
McConnell, Lloyd, 56
McCormick & Son, 117
McDaniel, Hugh F., 3–4
McGreevy, P., 114
McHenry & Bryan Produce, 116, 118
McIlroy, J. H., 52, 55–57
McIlroy, Martha, 166
McIlroy, W. H., 165–166
McKee, Kenneth, 87
McKinney, Andy, 163–164
Meadow Vale, 29, 36
Mecklin, Robert, 185
Meistrell's Grocery, 129
Mellon, Andrew, 94
Menges Cash Grocery, 119, 130
Miller & Son, 121
Miller, A. H., 115, 116
Miller, John E., 149–150
Milligan, Harry B., 130
Mitchell, B., 119
Mitchell, Eli C., 133
Moneyhun, J. R., 184
Moore, Algy (Algie), 118, 119
Moore Cash Grocery, 116
Moore, J. F., 56
Moran, Ed, 29
Morelock, T. E., "Washington County Canneries: Then and Now," 103–110
Morgan, Gordon, 171
Morris, Alton (Alfred) Dewey, 138
Moss, C. L., 11
Moulton & Nelson, 115
Mount Comfort Female Seminary, 185
Mount Comfort Presbyterian Church, 185, 189
Mount Comfort School, 185, 189
Mountain Top Fruit Farm, 135
Mulholland & White, 115
Mulholland, C. A., 114
Mulrenin, John "Irish", 24, 31
Murphy, Bill 150–152

Murphy, J. W., 119, 128
Murphy, Mary Ann McKibben, 17

New Park Grocery, 130
Niman, L. W., 54
Nolen, W. L, 114
Northwest Arkansas Lumber Co., 5, 98–99
Nyajeka, Tumani, 172–173
Nye, John, 113

"Old School Houses: What Is Their Fate?" by Lloyd O. Warren, 179–201
Overstreet, Elizabeth, 21
Ozark Brewing Company, 135
Ozark Institute, 185
Ozark Natural Foods, 139
Ozark Poultry & Egg Co., 118
Ozark Wagon Co., 10, 13

Paddy-Corley Iron Co., 16
Park Cash Grocery, 130
Parker, Mrs. Jimmie, 133
Parks, J. A., 28
Parksdale Addition, 28
Parlor Grocery, 115
Patterson, Cora, 159
Pearson, Matthew, I., 130
Pearson, Tom, photo, 65
Pearson, W. D., 130
Pennock, Mrs. Seth, 128
Pense's Grocery & Market, 128
Perkins, Rex, 146
Perry Grocery & Market, 132
Perry, Joan, 87
Pettigrew, George A. (or H.), 2
Pettigrew, Zebulon M., 2
Phillips, Anita, 89–90
Phillips Grocery, 130
Phillips, John, 184
Phillips, Kath, 137
Phillips Mission Street Grocery, 129
Phipps, J. H., 23
Piggly Wiggly, 121, 131
Pioneer Foods, 109
Pitkin & Mayes Lumber Co., 6, 7, 11, 13–, 16, 17, 22
Pitkin, Erastus, 6, 10–13
Pitkin, Joel M., 11, 12
Pitkyn, Wyllyam, 11
Pittsburgh Reduction Co., 94
Polk family, 163
Polk Stanley Architects, 81
Portnell, D., 118
Powers, David, 78, 80
Prichard, Anne Johnson, 22–23
Purdy's Food Store, 132
Puterbaugh, G. F., 119
Putman, Bill, 146
Pyeatte, Jacob, 45, 48, 204
Pyeatte, Mary Polly, 42, 48

Quicktown, 25
Quinn, Jim, photo, 123

Ranalli, Deborah, 90
Red Hill District, 162
Red Spot LLC, 36
Red Star Spoke Factory, 6
Reed, Guy T., 121
Reed, Steven, 29
Reep's Grocery, 119, 120
Reese, J. C., 116
Regular United Fishback Baptist Church, 192, 198
Renton, James Ray, 87
Reserve Supply Lumber 35
Rife, Mrs. A. D., photo, 65

Riffel, Brent E., "'A Celebration of Endurance': Fayetteville's St. James United Methodist Church," 159–170
Robards & Morrison, 114
Rock Street Grocery, 120
Rogers and Witt Milling Co., 35
Rogers and Witt Hatchery, 35
Rogers, T. J., 114
Rollins, John, 200
Rollins, Ora Belle, 200
Rollins, W. H., 53
Rough, C. C., 119
Rouse, Fred, J., 133
Rouw Co., 128
Rouw, H., Produce, 118
Rowden, J. W., 130
Royal Barber Shop, 23
Royal Café, 23
Royal Theater, 23
Rural Builders Club, 182

Safeway Stores, 130
Saint Louis & San Francisco Railroad (Frisco), 98–99
Salem School, 194, 199
Sandford, Claude Herbert, 8–10
Sandford Hardwood Lumber Co., 6, 7
Sandford, Samuel, 8
Sanford, Lillian, 8
Sav-It Grocery, 121, 134
Saxton, Jeanette, 172
Schwartz, Gus F., 129
Scott, John P., 118
Scott, Mrs. Roy, photo, 65
Seamster, John W., 117
Searcy, W. H., 103
Segraves, Warren, 73, 76
Shaddox Grocery, 137
Shady Grove School, 190, 197
Shelton, Ralph, 202, 203
Shelton, Sarah, 202, 203
Shelton, T. Ewing, 67
Sherry, Earl A., 129
Simmons, W. M., 8
Simpson, Ladd & Co., 116
Skelton, Dwain H., "Skelton vs. Shelton: The Verdict Is In," 202–203
Skelton, J. W., grocery, 118
Skelton, Jacob, 203
Skelton, James, 203
Skelton, John, 203
Skelton, Ralph, 202
Skelton, Red, 203
Skelton, Robert I, 203
Skelton, Robert II, 203
"Skelton vs. Shelton: The Verdict Is In," by Dwain H. Skelton, 202–203
Skelton, William, 202, 203
Skelton, Zachariah, 203
Skillern, John A., 183
Sligo/Hargis/City Lumber warehouse, 38–39
Sligo Iron Store Co., 18–20
Sligo Wagon Wood Co., 5, 6–7, 14, 16–17, 18–19, 21, 24, 28, 29, 31, 32
Smelser & Eason, 117, 134
Smith, Kim M., 78, 86–87, 144
Snappy Service Grocery, 120, 128
Sneed Brothers, 116
Son, Michael, 182
Son, Nancy Jane, 182
Son's Chapel School, 182, 186
Southgate IGA, 139
Springdale Canning Co., 103
Square Deal Grocery, 119
St. James Baptist Church, 161
St. James United Methodist Church, 159–170

St. Louis and San Francisco Railway, 2, 3
St. Paul line, 4, 5, 6
Stamps, Bette, 88–89
Stanley, J. H., 117
Stapp, George H., 116
Star Grocery, 117, 121, 128
Steele Canning, 109–110
Steele Community, 198
Steele, Joe, 109
Steele, Phillip W., 205
Steene, William, 62
Steve's Place, 121
Stice, J. L., 7–8
Stiles, Laura, 136
Stirman & Dickson, 113
Stockburger, Lloyd "Stocky," 87, 147–148
Stockwell, George, 60
Stokenberry, Glen, 146
Storey, William, 78
Storey, William A., 144
Stubblefield, Herman, 128, 129
Sugg, Ann Wiggans, quoted, 66
Sullivan, William D., 185
Summers, Carlos, 172
Supreme Food Market, 128
Sutherland, Cyrus, 169
Sycamore Missionary Baptist Church, 200
Sycamore School, 196, 200

Tapp, Ralph, W., 128–129
Taylor, J. T., 13
Taylor, T. K., 118
Taylor's Grocery & Market, 135
Teague, Taft, 86
Thom, Mrs. J. C., 13
Thomas and Drake Canning Co., 34
Thomas, Elizabeth, 198
Thomas, John, 198
Thomas, Rylan C., 34
Thomas School, 193, 198
Thomas-Lake View Bible Church, 193
Thompson, A. L., 8
Thompson, Charles, L., 52, 55–56, 97
Thrasher, Gene, 71
Tillman, John M., 95
Time Capsule, 141
Tin Cup, 162
Troeger, Edw. I., 130
Tru-Val-U Food Market, 128
Tucker, O. H., 28
Tyson, John, 100

Vale Post Office, 29, 119
Van Winkle, Peter, 5
Vaughan, Loren E., 136, 137
Vincennes, 204
"Visiting the Bean Carnahan Cemetery," by Bob Keen, 42–48

Wages Bros. Construction Co., 5
Wal-Mart, 139; Neighborhood Market, 139
Walker, Bryan, 86
Walker, C. W., 54, 55
Walker, David, 161
Walker, Fannie, photo, 65
Walker, George, 161
Walker, Sarah, 85–86
Wappel, Tony, "The Historic Washington County Courthouse," 51–84
Ward, H. G., 121, 135
Ward's Grocery & Service Station, 134, 138
Warren, Elliott L., 199

Warren, Lloyd O., "Old School Houses: What Is Their Fate?" 179–201
Washburn, Cephas, 185
Washington County Bank, 2
"Washington County Canneries: Then and Now," by T. E. Morelock, 103–110
Washington County Courthouse, history of, 51–84
Washington County schools, 179–201
Washington Cty Schoolhouse #157, 29
Waters, H. Franklin, 150
Watson, W. A., 113
Watson's Supermarket, 138
Webb, Ann, 205
Webb, C. W., 205
Westgate IGA, 139
Whayne, Jeannie, 94
Whitaker, Mildred Campbell, 202
White, J. C., 132
White, J. E., 132
White's Grocery and Station, 132
Whittemore, Carol, quoted, 33
Wiggans, Helen Hudgins, 66
Wilkins, Frank, 130
Williams & Williams Grocery 133
Williams, Bill, 133
Williams, J. H., 118
Williams, Patrick G., "Arkansas and Washington County 100 Years Ago," 92–102
Williams, Paul X, 150
Williams Produce, 118, 128
Williams, W. E., 57
Wilson, Allan M., 62
Wilson and Dickson, 115
Wilson, E., 116
Winchester Cash Grocery & Market, 121, 128
Winchester, J. F., 117, 135; photo, 125
Winn, Robert, quoted, 4
Witsell, Evans, & Roscoe, 77–78, 81
Witt, James O. Jr., 33
Wohlford, Earl, 86
Wohlford, Syble, 86
Wolf, A. F., 60
Woolford, W. O., 52
Woolsey, William T., 11
Wurtz, D. A., 56

Young, Sam, 165

Zimmerman, Stacey A., 144
Zion School, 184, 188
Zion-Oak Grange, 184, 188

PLANNED GIFTS

Making charitable gifts during your lifetime can provide income, gift, and estate-tax savings, and making charitable gifts in your will can provide an estate-deduction for the value of that gift.

If you are making regular gifts to the Washington County Historical Society or would like to start, you may find it beneficial to set up or give:

1. **A charitable lead trust** that will pay income to WCHS for a set period.
2. **A charitable remainder trust** that will allow you to transfer property to a trust set up for WCHS without paying capital gains tax on the sale of the property.
3. **Appreciated securities** at their current value and take an income tax deduction for the year up to 30% of adjusted gross income.
4. **Gifts from your retirement account** that could be an integral part of planning for those withdrawals.
5. **An irrevocable life insurance trust** that could own your life insurance, when it no longer serves its purpose, to make a charitable gift that could reduce the estate's tax bill.

There are a number of ways to enhance your retirement plans while still providing for your charitable interests and making gifts you never dreamed possible. Consult with your financial advisor on other ways you can make charitable donations. These planned gifts will provide added tax benefits for you and your beneficiaries while helping to support the vital mission of the Washington County Historical Society for years to come.

Flash Back
Washington County Historical Society
118 East Dickson, Fayetteville, AR 72701

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